

someone they loved go away to war. I'm talking about the newlywed wife whose husband departed just months after their marriage. I'm talking about the young toddler who barely knew their father before they deployed. I'm talking about the mom and dad who shed tears as their young child left to join the fight. I'm talking about each and every family member who had someone they loved fight in Vietnam. They sacrificed so much and deserve to be commended as well.

Mr. Speaker, today we salute those who served our nation in Vietnam, and, on behalf of a grateful nation, we thank them for their patriotism and service. May we never forget their sacrifice, may God bless our veterans, and may God always bless the United States of America.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 21, 2016

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to be at votes on the evening of March 14, 2016 because my flight from Portland, Oregon, was delayed. If I had been present, I would have voted for passage of S. 2426, H. Con. Res. 75, and H. Con. Res. 121, all of which passed the House under suspension of the rules.

S. 2426, a bill to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan in the International Criminal Police Organization, would move Taiwan closer to having access to the International Criminal Police Organization's (INTERPOL) global police communication system. In November 2015, I voted for a similar bill, H.R. 1853, and I support policies that further Taiwan's participation in international relations.

H. Con. Res. 75, a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that atrocities committed by ISIL against religious and ethnic minorities are "war crimes," "crimes against humanity," "genocide" passed the House unanimously. I support the resolution, and I would have voted for it if I had been present.

H. Con. Res. 121, a resolution expressing the sense of Congress condemning the gross violations of international law amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Government of Syria, its allies, and other parties to the conflict in Syria, passed the House by a vote of 392–3, and I would have voted for the bill if I had been present. The atrocities committed against the citizens of Syria are appalling and inhumane, and I strongly condemn them.

HONORING THE LEADERSHIP OF NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE

HON. CRESENT HARDY

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 21, 2016

Mr. HARDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the service of five of the most outstanding leaders in our United States Air Force.

These five men, Major General Jay Silveria, Brigadier General Christopher Short, Colonel

Richard Boutwell, Colonel Thomas Dempsey, and Colonel Aaron Steffens, have all served with honor and distinction at Nellis Air Force Base back in my district in southern Nevada.

For those who do not know, Nellis Air Force Base is the most important asset in our Air Force. So important, in fact, that there is the oft repeated slogan that, "As goes Nellis, so goes the United States Air Force."

And this isn't just some clever saying. Nellis is home to the Air Force's most advanced and realistic schools and training exercises. It is truly the epicenter of the three T's: testing, tactics, and training.

With the vast array of resources and missions carried out at the base, our Airmen are able to take the fight to our enemies with the full force and power of the world's greatest Air Force.

As a freshman Member of Congress, I could not have asked for a better cadre of officers to lead the many young servicemembers who call my district home. Their principled leadership and dogged determination to achieve excellence in every facet of their mission is truly an inspiration to everyone in our community.

It has been a privilege to develop strong working relationships with each of these commanders, and to seek their informed counsel on some of the most pressing issues affecting the readiness and capabilities of our Air Force as well as our national security priorities.

While I am sad to see them go, I know that they will bring the same integrity and leadership to their new commands.

To Tonto, Junior, Chase, Vader, and Fangs, the nation is grateful for your service, and I wish you all the best.

Aim High.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 21, 2016

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus in this critical fight to ensure full voting rights for all Americans.

I'd like to thank my colleagues, Congresswoman JOYCE BEATTY, and Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES for organizing this special order and for their dedicated leadership in protecting the right of all Americans to vote.

I'd also like to thank Chairman G. K. BUTTERFIELD for his leadership of our caucus as we work to ensure equality and democracy for all American families.

Mr. Speaker, since 2013, when the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in their *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, too many Americans have seen their voting rights weakened and undermined.

This year, as we celebrated the 51st anniversary of the historic civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, the very progress we celebrated was under attack.

This year, 16 states have enacted new voting restrictions for the first time in a presidential election since the Voting Rights Act was made law more than 50 years ago. These new barriers range from unnecessary voter ID laws, to ending same-day voter registration, and reducing or completely eliminating early voting.

Since 2010, 21 states have implemented new restrictions. This is a crisis.

While states have put up barriers, Speaker RYAN, Judiciary Chairman GOODLATTE and some Congressional Republicans have ignored the clear, bipartisan consensus to fix the Voting Rights Act and restore voting rights protections for all Americans.

Republican Congressman JAMES SENSENBRENNER has introduced the bipartisan Voting Rights Amendment Act (H.R. 885), which I am proud to co-sponsor with more than 100 other Members of Congress. This is a good first step to restoring voting protections for all Americans.

But let me be clear—simply fixing the Voting Rights Act isn't enough.

We need to empower voters and Congresswoman SEWELL's bill—the Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 2867)—would do just that.

It's past time that Congress got serious about protecting voting rights and passing the Voting Rights Advancement Act—and we are here to support these efforts.

Our work is not over until the voice of every American is heard. So I join my colleagues in the CBC tonight to implore our colleagues in the House to work harder to protect the bedrock of our democracy—the right to vote.

DEFINING CERTAIN ATROCITIES AS WAR CRIMES, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, AND GENOCIDE

SPEECH OF

HON. TULSI GABBARD

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 14, 2016

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I co-sponsored and will vote for H. Con. Res. 75 because of my grave concern about the genocide against Christians, Alawites, Shiites, Druze, Yazidis, and other religious minorities in Syria. However, I was extremely disappointed by amendment language later added to this resolution in Committee that provides "cover" or an excuse for ISIS and other terrorist organizations committing this genocide.

Specifically, the language I object to is the following: "Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's violence against the Syrian people has attracted foreign fighters from around the world, who have supported and committed ISIL atrocities."

I fully reject this amendment to the resolution which gives moral legitimacy to the actions of ISIS, al-Qaeda, and others who are committing genocide against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities in Syria.

This amendment is an obvious attempt to make ISIS look like their cause is legitimate. This is unacceptable and undermines the heart of this resolution.

This is very unfortunate because the problem of genocide against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities in Syria is very serious. The main area in Syria where Christians and other religious minorities have any protection from being slaughtered, and where they can practice their own religious faiths without fear of persecution, is in the territory controlled by the Syrian government of Assad.

The reality is that the language added to this Resolution, coupled with its sister H. Con. Res. 121, is really aimed at justifying the overthrow of Assad—the result of which would be a complete assault and elimination of the Christians and other religious minorities in Syria.

The fact that this Resolution, which was originally introduced to increase protection for Christians, Yazidis and other religious minorities, has now been hijacked so it becomes a vehicle to increase the likelihood of even greater genocide against those religious minorities is a disgrace.

The reality is that if the Assad government is overthrown tomorrow, every Christian, every Yazidi, and every other religious minority and ethnic minority in Syria will be in greater danger than ever before from ISIS, al-Qaeda, and others who are slaughtering them.

This Resolution is no longer a sincere effort to protect religious minorities. It has become a resolution to give moral legitimacy to ISIS and al-Qaeda's genocidal activities, and would bring about even greater genocide of such religious minorities by eliminating the only area where they now have refuge—in Assad-controlled areas.

DEFINING CERTAIN ATROCITIES AS WAR CRIMES, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, AND GENOCIDE

SPEECH OF

HON. EDWARD R. ROYCE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 14, 2016

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, today we take a step reserved for only the most dire of circumstances.

The so-called Islamic State—or “ISIS”—is committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against religious and ethnic minorities. Yes, genocide. House Concurrent Resolution 75—led by Congressman JEFF FORTENBERRY, Congresswoman ANNA ESHOO, and more than 200 bipartisan cosponsors—declares that fact clearly, and was adopted unanimously by the Foreign Affairs Committee earlier this month.

Our Committee has held many hearings on this group's brutal war to eliminate religious minorities and bulldoze their histories. ISIS's tools include mass murder, beheadings, crucifixions, rape, torture, enslavement, and the kidnapping of children, among other atrocities. ISIS dynamites churches and flattens ancient monasteries. Put simply, their desire is to erase the existence of these groups from their self-proclaimed caliphate, by any means necessary.

The crime of genocide is killing or inflicting other serious harm with the intent to destroy a religious or ethnic group—in whole or in part. ISIS is guilty.

ISIS has clearly stated that it cannot tolerate the continued existence of the Yazidi community, and has followed these statements up with widespread killing and enslavement. Last fall, our Committee Members met with “Bazi,” a young Yazidi woman from Iraq, who bravely recounted her brutal captivity and abuse at the hands of the terrorist group.

ISIS also has made no secret of its “hatred for the cross worshippers.” In one of their

gruesome videos addressed to Christians, an ISIS spokesman taunts the so-called “people of the cross” saying “you will not have safety—even in your dreams—until you embrace Islam.” Next, 15 Christian captives are beheaded on camera.

Sister Diana Momeka, who testified before us after fleeing the ISIS offensive against Mosul, poignantly described a “cultural and human genocide,” and observed that today “[t]he only Christians that remain in the Plain of Niniveh those who are held as hostages.”

Most telling: Ask how many of the ancient, indigenous Christian communities survive in the areas where ISIS has consolidated its control? Experts inform me that the number is zero.

ISIS brutalizes anyone whose beliefs conflict with its own narrow ideology, including fellow Muslims. It has torn the rich religious and cultural tapestry of that region to shreds.

At a hearing four months ago, when Ambassador Anne Patterson, representing the Administration, was asked whether ISIS is committing genocide, she said that we could expect “some announcements on that very shortly.” We are still waiting.

In December, I wrote Secretary Kerry a bipartisan letter, with 29 colleagues, urging that any genocide determination must reflect the full reality of the situation faced by all groups—Yezidis, Christians, and others. The State Department is facing a statutory deadline of March 17th—this Thursday—to provide Congress with an evaluation of the genocide question. Today's consideration puts Congress on record as to how the Secretary of State should rule.

This past week, the Knights of Columbus sent Secretary Kerry an extensive 280-page report that provides both the legal basis and more than 200 pages of detailed, eyewitness documentation to support its conclusion that “ISIS is committing genocide—the ‘crime of crimes’—against Christians and other religious groups.”

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the European Parliament have found their voices: Both have publicly concluded that Yezidis, Christians, and other minority groups are facing genocide at the hands of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Today, the voice of this body, representing the American people, will be heard.

The House of Representatives led the push to recognize genocide in Sudan in the late 1990s. I remember the critical role we played in that debate. We have recognized genocide in other situations, including Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Sadly, it is time to make this solemn declaration again, to speak the truth about the atrocities of ISIS, and hope that the Administration and the world will do the same, before ISIS has succeeded in its genocidal campaign. And it should go without saying, this brutal terrorist organization and its caliphate ambitions must be shattered.

AUTHORIZING THE SPEAKER TO APPEAR AS AMICUS CURIAE ON BEHALF OF THE HOUSE

SPEECH OF

HON. KAREN BASS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 17, 2016

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I submit this statement to publicly express my strong opposition to H. Res. 639. I will vote against this resolution as I have already signed onto an amicus brief to the Supreme Court supporting President Obama's Executive Action on deferred action.

Today, Speaker RYAN brought a completely partisan resolution to the House Floor. H. Res. 639 would grant him the power to file an amicus brief with the Supreme Court on behalf of the entire House of Representatives to support the one-sided position of only 26 GOP-controlled states in the partisan lawsuit of *United States v. Texas*. These states are claiming that the Administration did not have the legal authority under the laws of the United States to issue its Immigration Executive Action in November 2014. Speaker RYAN does not reflect my view or the view of many of my fellow colleagues on the Hill.

What Speaker RYAN ignores is that every single Democratic and Republican President since Eisenhower has used that authority to take action on immigration, including six Republican Presidents, and as recently as 2012, the Supreme Court, including Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Anthony Kennedy, recognized the legitimacy of Executive Branch discretion in immigration.

Last year, I joined 181 House Democrats in signing an amicus brief in support of President Obama's Executive Action on immigration because the deferred action programs derive from the Executive Branch's longstanding legal authority to exercise discretion in the enforcement of our immigration laws, to take necessary actions to carry out the Executive's authority under the Immigration and Nationality Act, and to establish national immigration enforcement policies and priorities.

Instead of these divisive and partisan actions, Speaker RYAN should take up comprehensive immigration reform that sets out a path to citizenship for the millions of people leaving in the United States.

CONDEMNING VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA

SPEECH OF

HON. TULSI GABBARD

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 14, 2016

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose H. Con. Res. 121.

Make no mistake, this is a War Bill—a thinly veiled attempt to use the rationale of “humanitarianism” as a justification for overthrowing the Syrian government of Assad. Similar resolutions were used in the past to legitimize the regime change wars to overthrow the governments of Iraq and Libya. I will have no part of it. I oppose H. Con. Res. 121 because I oppose more unnecessary, interventionist regime change wars.